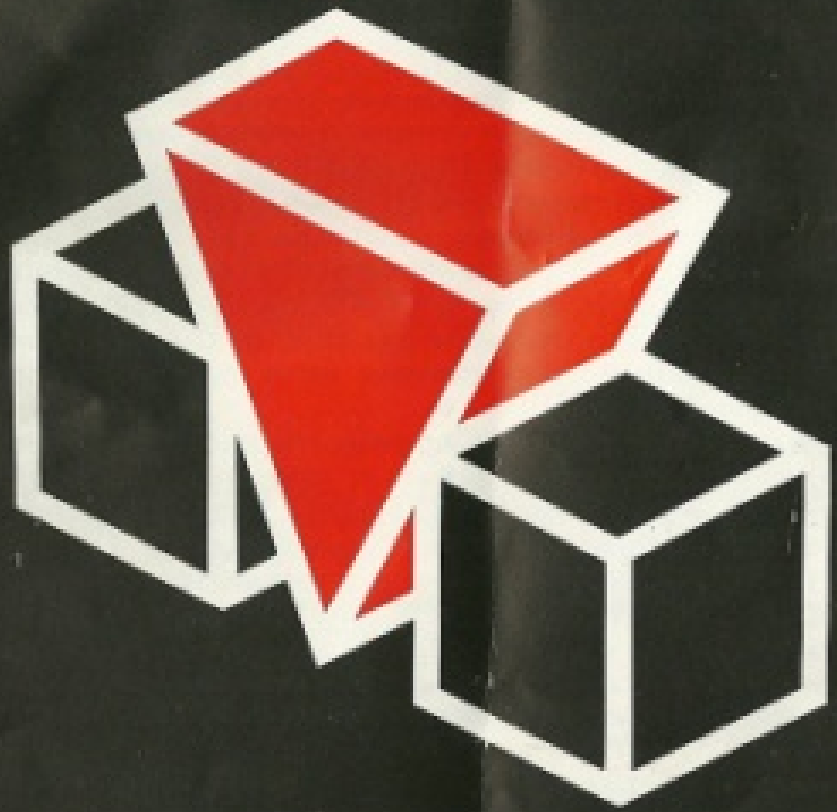
■ A STATE OF INDEPENDENCE

RED WEDGE



THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

WHAT IS Red Wedge and where do *you* fit into the scheme of things?

Basically, Red Wedge is an organisation that has been set up by various artists, musicians, young actors and writers. Each has differing political views but all are totally committed to one thing – the creation of a fairer, saner society which benefits all and not just the few.

An impossible task? Maybe. But at the end of the day how will we ever know if we don't at least try? To this end, Red Wedge believes that the re-instatement of the Labour Party at the next General Election is vital. This isn't to say that we all believe the Labour Party is 100% perfect. Far from it.

One of Red Wedge's aims, and where you fit in, is to establish a way for young people to voice their opinions, to tell the policy makers of the Party what they want to see happening, and how they want to shape their own lives.

Politics – something which actively affects *every* person in the land – often seems a dour, grey, mysterious institution run by equally dour, grey people. No wonder that at the last general election, over half the young people who are unemployed couldn't be bothered to vote!

On both sides of the political spectrum, there are a lot of people who have a vested interest in keeping the world of politics closed off. They have deliberately kept it boring and inaccessible to those they are meant to represent. They have managed to instil the idea that we are powerless to change anything, that we should just sit back and let those "who know better" get on with it.

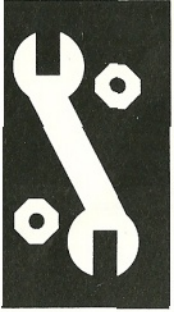
Red Wedge aims to create, through the world of arts, a fresh and direct approach to politics, which ultimately will affect and involve *you*.

Why? Because we believe that young people have a right to shape their own futures and by doing so, shape society as a whole for the better of all.

The Government talks a lot about the "individual". But you only have to look at the laws they have passed restricting the amount of money young people are entitled to, either from training schemes, work or the welfare state, to realise that they are more interested in keeping us quiet and penniless than in giving us a say.

Red Wedge will fight this all the way. We want to make young people realise that our lives, and the kind of life that is on offer, is directly related to politics and the decisions made by the politicians – who *we*, let's not forget, elect to represent *us*, and not the other way round.

From the price of a bus ticket to what films are shown on TV, everyday realities are the result of politics. It's up to us to make sure that what we want is what we get.



TRAINING

BRITAIN NEEDS highly trained workers, and good training can help young people get interesting and high paid jobs. But the "training" many young people get now simply isn't good enough.

Many young people used to get the chance of good training and a skilled job by becoming apprentices. But since 1979 the number of apprenticeships has fallen by more than half. For most young people the only chance of "training" they have now is on the Youth Training Scheme.

The Government started YTS in 1982 to give 400,000 young people every year a "bridge between school and work". YTS is going to get even bigger, with two years of training offered to every 16 *year old school-leaver and one year to* every 17 year old school-leaver. The Government often calls YTS a "triumphant success". There ARE good YTS schemes, but for many young people YTS hasn't been a "success".

■ **YTS isn't really voluntary. 1,000 young people a month have their dole money cut because they say no to the offer of a place on YTS or leave early.**

■ **YTS is unfair to black people and to women. Black people are pushed into YTS schemes that aren't run by employers, so fewer get jobs when they leave. Women are pushed into YTS schemes that lead to "traditional" women's jobs, usually those with low pay and bad conditions.**

We think young people deserve better than YTS. They need

■ **A high quality two year scheme, where all the places offer a good chance of a job.**

■ **A proper training allowance – at least £36 in the first year.**

■ **Control over their training. Trainees should be asked about things that affect them.**

YTS – No proper training

■ **Not enough people get a job when they leave YTS – one in three go back on the dole, 120,000 last year.**

■ **The "training allowance" paid on YTS isn't enough – most trainees get only £27.30 a week. The allowance is worth less every year; the Government is keeping it low to help cut pay for young *people when they go into jobs.***

■ **Too many YTS places don't offer proper training at all. Many trainees do boring, useless jobs – like filling boxes in a store – and get paid much less than older workers. No wonder many people think YTS is "cheap labour".**

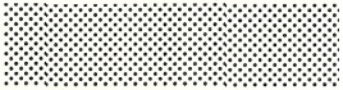
■ **Protection by a trade union. Trainees should be encouraged to join unions, and unions must listen to their views. Unions must be able to stop training schemes that aren't good enough.**

■ **Training schemes that are fair to everyone. Schemes that are unfair to women or black people must change or be closed down.**

The Labour Party has begun to argue for a proper training scheme, in its JOBS AND INDUSTRY CAMPAIGN. But if the Campaign is to work more young people must get involved and the Party must listen to what they have to say.

YTS – Youth Training Scandal

■ **YTS isn't safe enough. 35 trainees have been killed, and thousands more injured. The parents of some dead trainees have been offered just £78 as "compensation".**



UNEMPLOYMENT

SINCE 1979, a thousand people have joined the dole queue every day. There are now 1 ¼ million under 25 year olds on the dole – that means that more than one in five young people who want a job can't get one. And it takes longer and longer for people on the dole to get a job – there are ⅓ million under 25 year olds who've been on the dole for more than a year. Unemployment isn't shared out fairly.

■ Young people are twice as likely to be unemployed as older adults.

Youth discrimination

■ Black people are more likely to be unemployed than white people. One in ten white people who want a job can't get one, compared with nearly one in six people from an Indian background, one in four people from a Afro-Carribean background, and one in three people from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background.

Long term problems

If you're unemployed you get very little money – most unemployed under 18 year olds get only £18.20 a week (see the section on benefits).

Unemployment leads to depression, illness and sometimes even early death. Unemployment people are ten times more likely to try and commit suicide than people in work. Unemployment may lead to other social problems, like drug abuse.

The Government makes many excuses for record youth unemployment.

■ **"Young people are paid too much." NOT TRUE. Young people's pay has gone down since 1979, but youth unemployment has gone up even faster than adult unemployment (see the section on low pay).**

■ **Young people don't want to work. Jeffrey Archer, Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party, said that "it's no use saying that the (unemployment) figures are three million. I suspect there's a vast amount in there who could work if they wanted to". NOT TRUE. Most unemployed young people are desperate for work. The Government's own figures show that four million people want to work but can't find a job – but there are 7 unemployed people chasing every vacancy.**

The truth is that there are NO excuses for record unemployment. We don't want a society that keeps four million people doing nothing when there are so many jobs that need to be done. We want a society that offers everyone a fair chance of a job, and the money and self-respect that a job brings.

No excuses for record unemployment

ALLOWANCES

MOST YOUNG people aged 16 to 19 don't get the money they need.

■ **If you stay at school at 16 or go to college you probably won't get any money at all. That means that only young people with parents who can afford to pay for them can study on A level and other courses.**

■ **If you go to college at 18 you still won't get any money unless you're doing a degree-type course. Even students who do get grants get less and less every year – the full grant is worth 17% less now than in 1979. And the Government now wants to stop students with grants from getting any benefit money.**

young people to stay living independently in their own home – they'll either have to go back to their parents or they'll be homeless. The Government seems to think you're a child until you're 25.

We think that all 16 to 19 year olds should get enough money to live on – whatever they choose to do. We think that's the way to make sure that young people can make their own minds up – be independent.

The Labour Party has begun to argue for that too. They say that all young people will get some money between 16 and 19.

■ **If you're in a job you should get a proper wage – no employer should be allowed to pay less than an amount set by the Government every year. That's what happens in other countries – even the USA – and it works very well.**

New laws to makes less pay legal

■ **If you go on the Youth Training Scheme at 16 you will probably get only £27.30 a week (see the section on Training).**

■ **If you go on the dole you will get:**
£18.20 a week in Supplementary Benefit if you're under 18.
£23.60 a week in Supplementary Benefit if you're over 18 and live with your parents.
£29.50 a week in Supplementary Benefit and live independently as a "householder".

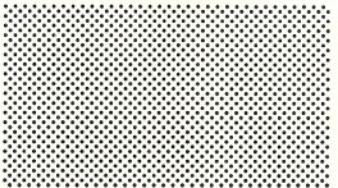
■ **If you go on a training scheme you should get at least £36 a week – and many young people will get more as the trade unions they join agree with employers on more money.**

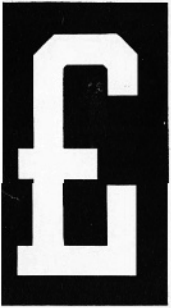
■ **If you stay at school or go to college at 16 you should get £27 a wek – so that you can afford to study if that's what you want to do.**

■ **If You go to college at 18 you should get a proper grant, there should be more courses that pay you a grant while you study, and money for people who want to study part-time.**

Cutting back on your benefit money

The Government has said that it wants to cut this benefit money even more. It wants to get rid of Supplementary Benefit and bring in a new scheme called "Income Supplement", where you get less money if you're under 25 than if you're over 25. 280,000 young single people will get less money, most will lose £3 – £4 a week but many, especially "householders" will lose more than £5 a week. It will be hard for many of these





LOW PAY

THE GOVERNMENT thinks that young people are paid too much. Mrs Thatcher has said that young people are "pricing themselves out of jobs".

This is just not true. Young people lucky enough to have jobs have seen their pay cut year by year.

■ **Between 1979 and 1984, under 18 year old men had their pay cut by 4% on average, and under 18 year old women by 2% on average.**

■ **In 1979, 18 to 20 year old men got about two fifths of older men's pay. By 1984 they got only a third. In 1979 18 to 20 year old women got nearly three fifths of older women's pay. By 1984 *they got less than a half.***

All these pay cuts haven't led to jobs. Youth unemployment has gone up even faster than adult unemployment. For over 21 year olds unemployment has risen by about 150%, for under 21 year olds it has almost trebled.

But the Government is now trying to cut young people's pay even more. This year, it wants to take away the protection of WAGES COUNCILS from everyone aged under 21.

Wages Councils were started back in 1909 to help people in jobs with low pay and bad conditions. They force employers by law to pay people a decent minimum wage, and they make sure people get proper holidays and other conditions of work.

Not every low-paid worker is helped by Wages Councils. But half a million young people are, inluding 350,000 young women. The pay rates the Wages Councils set aren't high, for young people they are usually around £50 to *£60 a week, but they can be as low as* £30 a week. If the Government gets its way, employers will soon be able to pay these young people even less.

GAY RIGHTS

BRITAIN'S RECORD on gay rights is the worst in Europe. The 1967 Sexual Offences Act legalised homosexual acts between two consenting males over the age of 21 in private, but no more than that. Any variations on that recipe still constitute an imprisonable offence.

It is only in recent years that this law has been extended to Scotland and Ulster, where it was still an imprisonable offence. While the authorities are said to look leniently on it, homosexuality is still illegal in Eire.

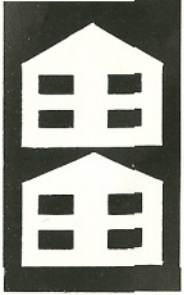
Lesbianism has never been illegal. Queen Victoria is said to have told Parliament it didn't exist. But lesbians and gays are affected by far more restrictions than the ruling on the age of sexual consent.

■ **Lesbians and gays are barred from certain jobs. In the armed forces, it means court martial and dishonorable discharge. Government departments operate an unofficial vetting system.**

■ **Lesbians and gays have been fighting for years to establish their right to work as able professionals in the teaching and caring sectors. Private industry operates its own systems: from outright refusal up to turning a blind eye on sackings, harassment and physical attacks.**

■ **Lesbians and gays experience discrimination in obtaining council housing, welfare, employment, health care, legal rights, parental authority in divorces, even the right to their own belongings when a partner dies and the executors move in. This is on top of the daily problems with the authorities the media, colleagues, family, friends and strangers.**

The spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has worsened the situation. AIDS has spread in the classic manner of all diseases. Gays are the latest, if most visibly prone, of victims of a disease that first appeared among heterosexuals and is finding more and more ways of moving through society. *In 1985 the Conservative* government passed an extraordinary law allowing the forcible detainment of AIDS sufferers: People with AIDS are more at risk from infection by others than others are at risk of infection by a disease that can only be communicated through sexual contact. It is estimated that funds made available by the Government amount to less than a fifth needed to cope with the current AIDS situation.



HOUSING

MORE AND more young people are finding it hard to get somewhere to live when they leave their parents' home. There are more homeless people than ever before.

That's not surprising when you look at what's happened to housing over the last few years.

■ **The amount of public money spent on housing has fallen by more than half since 1979.**

■ **About 400,000 construction workers who could be building new houses are stuck on the dole.**

Less chance of a decent home

■ **Many local councils don't even let many young people onto waiting lists for homes.**

■ **The law that means that councils have to find homes for homeless people (The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act) doesn't apply to most young people.**

Now the Government is changing the law to make things even more difficult for young people.

■ **The Government is trying to take away the benefit money that unemployed young people can get if they live in board and lodging. Young people will have their benefit taken away after a few weeks (usually four, sometimes two or eight) if they don't move to another area. This could mean about 40,000 young people left to wander round the country looking for a home and a job.**

■ **The Government wants to cut the housing benefit that young people paying rent can get if they are unemployed, or on low pay. We think that about 200 to 250,000 young people will lose money if the Government gets its way. Someone aged under 25 getting £70 a week and paying £18 a week in rent might lose about £9 a week in benefit (they would get £4 a week in benefit instead of £13 a week).**

We think that all young people should have the right to a decent home. To make sure that happens, at least these changes are needed.

■ **Councils should be given more money to build new houses, and repair old ones.**

■ **Councils shouldn't be allowed to be unfair to young people who want a council home.**

■ **The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act should be changed so that Councils have to house homeless young people.**

INTERNATIONALISM

CO-OPERATION NOT confrontation should be the rule between countries, as between individuals. Last year's massive response to Band Aid and Live Aid proved that people's concern knows no frontiers, while the brutal behaviour of the South African regime attracted condemnation from almost every government but Britain's.

A future for all of humanity can only be secured by a new mood of international respect and a real commitment to peace. Moves to negotiate away the world's arsenals of destruction must be a priority for any government, however difficult the process. Let's make 'United Nations' a reality.

YOUR END OF THE WEDGE

POLITICS MEANS involvement. So it's vital that if you're dissatisfied with any part of your life, you make sure that you use all the available means to change things. Find out who your local MP and councillors are. Get together with others and go and pressurise them. Check out all the major political parties and see what they're offering. Then make up your own mind.

Make sure you're registered to vote. Write to Red Wedge and tell us your proposals and ideas, who your favourite group is, or simply write for information.

In this day and age, the Establishment have managed to turn the word socialist into a dirty one. Red Wedge believes that it's one of the finest in the English language because it stands for dignity, it stands for compassion, it stands for a state of independence and the right to determine your own future. Now that's what we call socialism.

Red Wedge believes that everyone is a star. It's time we started treating each other like one.

This is the bottom line. Now is the time to reach up!

DON'T GET MAD GET ORGANISED

SNIP & SEND TO

RED WEDGE
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I like what you've told me and I'm interested in Red Wedge.
Please keep me posted.

NAME _____

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